

THE STORY OF THE GERMAN
FREIGHTER E. S. ANTILLA



Adolf (Dufi) Kock

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**Author
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**On the occasion of the commemoration of the
70th year of Aruba's involvement in WWII**

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Special Dedication

Special thanks to the following persons for their help, before and throughout this book:



Mr. Willem Donck first visited Aruba in 1986 on board of the Dutch frigate HNLMS Banckert. From 2001 on he came to Aruba on a regular basis for holidays and made dive trips to the wreck of *ES Antilla* and the wreck parts of *SSs Pedernales*. Over the years he kept on scuba diving and eventually worked as a part time Divemaster during his visits to Aruba. As a Divemaster he guided many divers to the wrecks and got intrigued by the wrecks themselves but even more by the myths surrounding them. In order to separate facts from fiction Willem searched for the real story and got himself submerged in archives such

as the Dutch National Archives and the Dutch Institute for Military History (NIMH). According to Willem the truth may be less exotic but is without a doubt just as fascinating and an important part of Aruba's history. And although the wrecks will disappear over time, the story will remain.



Mr. John Gray was born and educated in New Zealand. He has lived in New Zealand, Australia, and now resides in Toronto, Canada. He has traveled extensively in the Pacific, North America, Mexico, Europe and the Caribbean. He presently resides in Toronto and John and his wife make frequent trips to Aruba where the family has a home. John has

studied World War II and the Japanese war operations in the Pacific Rim. He is presently researching a feature film on the war time events in Aruba.

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Introduction

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, there were extensive shipping activities carried on by German Merchant Marine ships in the Caribbean. While the majority of this shipping was in fact legitimate trade, the German Merchant Marine was dominated by the German Authorities. It would eventually come under the direct control of Berlin upon the outbreak of the war.

The waters of the Caribbean were heavily patrolled by the Allied Forces due to the significant oil refining and production in Aruba, Curacao and Trinidad. With war imminent, these waters would prove particularly hostile for the German Merchant Marine.

In the days just before war was declared, the Captains of the German vessels sought refuge in the ports of neutral countries. As Aruba was a declared neutral country, being part of the Dutch Kingdom, several ships sought safe anchorage there, as the harbor in the neighboring island of Curacao was already congested with a large number of German ships.

The following story details the activities of the four German ships in Aruba during the early days of the war. The story highlights the actions leading up to the scuttling of the *Antilla* in Aruban waters, where she still lies today on her side in 60 feet of water, and attracts visits from snorkelers, scuba divers and tourists. Today the *Antilla* is a diveable wreck and a major tourist attraction.

Aruba's Silence is Broken

For long periods of time, sheets of heat lightning illuminated the darkened night skies above Punto Fijo, Venezuela, as the storms gathered over northern Venezuela. The distant roar and claps of thunder rumbled across the fourteen miles of Caribbean sea to Aruba. Other than a high humidity and a disturbed ocean swell, Aruba was at a peaceful rest.

Night had fallen after the spectacular golden and pink 6:30pm sunset that had been accentuated by the storm clouds in the west. In spite of neighboring Venezuela's storms, Aruba was still and quiet. No gentle trade winds blowing tonight.

At Malmok, on the northwestern shore of Aruba, a drama was about to unfold. Moored in a bay was a newly commissioned German freighter, *E.S. Antilla*, taking refuge from the British and Dutch naval forces. It was dark. The shores were unlit and uninhabited. It was an ideal place of refuge from the hostilities of war. The *Antilla* rolled and pitched at anchor in the swell that had accompanied the storms and low pressure over Venezuela.

Miles away, events were happening that would forever change the face of Aruba and her citizens. May 10, 1940 and the Germans invade a neutral Holland. Suddenly, Aruba is drawn into an unwanted war. Aboard *Antilla*, was Captain Ferdinand Schmidt who had to abide by the orders of October 30, 1939 to sink the ship if captured by Germany's enemies. These orders were absolute and final. As a newly launched vessel with the most modern of equipment, he was to scuttle and destroy the ship. Reluctantly, he summons his crew.

What follows is the story of the *Antilla's* demise and the fate of its crew:

Background: The German Freighters in Aruba

With the advent of World War II, the Captains of ships in the German Merchant Marine found themselves in unenviable situations, often facing capture and seizure of their ships. To avoid capture, a number of these Captains headed for safe havens in the harbours of neutral or friendly countries. Four of these ships eventually arrived in Aruba. They were the following:

The E.S. Antilla

E.S. Antilla (International code signal DKBA), a German freighter, was built in 1939 by Deutsche Werft in the Finkenwarder area of Hamburg. She was launched on March 21, 1939 and her date of completion was July 11, 1939. She left Germany on her maiden voyage on July 15, 1939, captained by Ferdinand Schmidt. The ship (121.4 mtrs/400ft, 4363 BRT) was built for the German firm Hamburg Amerikanische Packetfahrt Actien Gesellschaft (HAPAG). According to Lloyd's register 1939-1940 the *Antilla* was fitted with two steam turbines connected to an electric motor built by the Allgemeine Elektrizitats Gesellschaft Berlin (AEG). It carried a load of sulphur.

The S.S. Troja

On August 31, 1939 HAPAG (Hamburg Amerikanische Packetfahrt Actien Gesellschaft) vessel *S.S. Troja*, was built in 1922 by Howaldtswerke at Kiel, length 309 ft., 2390 BRT., International code signal DHYB), captained by Adolf Boendel, arrived in San Nicolas, Aruba, along with *M.S. Consul Horn*. It carried a load of bags with cement.

The M.S. Consul Horn

The *M.S. Consul Horn*, a German cargo and passenger ship owned by the shipping company Horn, built in 1904 by Harland & Wolff at Belfast, length 453 ft., 8384 BRT.,

International code signal DHIY, captained by Johannes Roer. It carried a valuable cargo of tobacco and sugar.

The M.S. Heidelberg

On September 1, 1939, the HAPAG freighter *M.S. Heidelberg* (built in 1925 by Vulcanwerke at Hamburg, length 450 ft., 6530 BRT., International code signal DCIB), captained by H. Spreckels and *E.S. Antilla* arrived and anchored in front of the San Nicolas harbor. The ship contained household effects for migration.

Antilla's Two Sister Ships

The *E.S. Antilla* had two identical sister ships that were launched in the same year (July and August 1939) and were regular freighters, *E.S. Arauca* and *E.S. Orizaba*.

The Newspaper Amigoe di Curacao

Shipping ads by HAPAG in the local newspaper Amigoe di Curacao show that the German Freighter *Antilla* left Curacao on August 9, 1939, heading for Colombia (Puerto Colombia as well as Cartagena) followed by ports in Panama, Costa Rica, and Guatemala to offload cargo from Germany. On August 25, 1939, as the *Antilla* was in the port of Galveston, Texas and loading 3,000 tons of sulphur destined for Europe, Captain Schmidt received a radio message from the German authorities for all German merchant ships to add the code word "Essberger". The first message that was transmitted to all German merchant ships read like this: "As agreed make observations for German naval observatory next week. Essberger". This code was a signal for all merchant fleet captains to open a sealed envelope with instructions. All German ships were ordered to leave the main shipping lanes. Shortly after this message the ships received a second message, with the code word "Essberger", which was a signal for the captains to alter their ships' names and appearance, and only communicate using the code. The

ships were to set course for Germany as soon as possible. Captain Schmidt decided to set course for Cartagena, Colombia, to take in fuel. But before the *Antilla* reached Cartagena a new (coded) message was received on August 28, 1939, instructing all merchant ships that could not reach a German harbor within four days to seek refuge in neutral harbors. On September 1, 1939, the *Antilla* refueled in Cartagena and left immediately for the neutral waters of Curacao. On his way to Curacao, Captain Schmidt was informed that the harbor in Curacao was packed with German ships (at one time a total of 14 ships) forcing him to seek refuge in Aruban waters along with the three other German cargo ships already in Aruba (*Consul Horn*, *Heidelberg*, and *Troja*). Therefore, the *Antilla* ended up in Aruba by accident.

The Invasion of Poland

On September 1, 1939 however Germany invaded Poland and that same day the *Antilla* (as well as HAPAG freighter *M.S. Heidelberg*) unexpectedly showed up in front of the harbor in San Nicolas in Aruba to seek refuge in neutral waters. As Holland, and therefore also Aruba as part of the Dutch Kingdom, took a neutral position in the beginning of World War II, the German ships were relatively safe in neutral waters.

On September 15, 1939, Aruba's Lieutenant Governor, Isaac Wagemaker, allowed all four ships to anchor on the less populated and quieter northwest side of the island opposite the beach at Malmok. He had their wireless systems put out of order and had the ships searched for arms. The Aruban government supplied them with water and the crews were allowed to walk on the shore whenever they liked. Some of them walked around the island with cameras just like tourists. As a matter of fact the men built a beach house (a castle) out of bamboo on the beach near the California light house. It is said that they had contact with an Aruban businessman by the name of Arends, and the two parties

were trading merchandise for little pieces of gold. To date, no documents prove this.

The liberty of freedom to visit the island was to be short lived. Due to espionage and spying by sailors from ships of nations friendly to Germany, the crew of the *Antilla* was ordered confined to the ship on April 12, 1940. There has not been any proof that any of the crew were in fact involved in these activities.

According to the HAPAG itinerary the *Antilla* was scheduled to depart from Curacao on September 8, 1939 again with destination Europe via Venezuela and Trinidad. The load of sulfur which was loaded in Galveston, Texas was unloaded in the San Nicolas harbor on October 13, 1939, after that she was presumed to be empty.

The Escapes

Since the allies (French and English forces) patrolled the waters around Aruba, all four ships remained in neutral waters, but eventually attempted to make escapes.

M.S. Consul Horn

On January 9, 1940, several crewmembers of the *Antilla*, *Heidelberg*, and *Troja* transferred to the German cargo vessel *Consul Horn* because at that moment the *Consul Horn* was the only vessel that had the intention to escape. Under the cover of night the Captain of *Consul Horn*, Johannes Roer, with a valuable cargo of tobacco and sugar heaves anchor and decides that it was time to try a daring escape to Germany. The captain had previously ordered his crew to repaint the ship with markings to make it look like a Russian freighter with the name "*Molodets*" and home-port Odessa, Ukraine. He sets course to Europe. The plan works out perfectly and the captain manages to deceive the French submarine *Augosta* and U.S. air reconnaissance. The choice is made to avoid the British channel and the ship takes the

western route around Great Britain. Things nearly went wrong when the ship was passing the Orkneys. The Orkney islands lie off the Northern tip of Scotland, where the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean meet. The ship is hailed by the British Emerald class cruiser *H.M.S. Enterprise* (D 52). The half Russian half English reply by the "*Molodets*" was not very convincing and Captain Henry Jack Egerton of the *H.M.S. Enterprise* decided to escort the "*Molodets*" to a nearby harbor. Fortune however was with the crew of the *Consul Horn* as *H.M.S. Enterprise* was called away for another urgent assignment. (Note: another source claims the vessel couldn't be boarded because of bad weather). On Tuesday, February 7, 1940 the *Consul Horn* reaches Norwegian waters having eluded or deceived the U.S. Navy Patrol planes from the Neutrality Patrol as well as British and French war ships which were patrolling the Caribbean area because of the refineries in Curacao and Aruba.

(Note: The *S.S. Consul Horn* was a German passenger/refrigerated cargo vessel of 6,689grt built in 1904 by Harland & Wolf, Belfast as the British steamer *S.S. Mamari* for Shaw Savill & Albion Company, Ltd., Southampton (founded 1882) In 1928 she was renamed as *S.S. Gerolstein*, in 1939 as *Consul Horn*, later in 1939 as *Consul* and in 1940 again renamed as *SS Consul Horn*. On July 20, 1942 she was mined in position 53.46N/06.25E near the German island of Borkum and sank. She lies as a wreck at a depth of approximately 14 meters. Last owner was Horn, H. C., Fruchtdamper A. G., Lubeck.)

M.S. Heidelberg and S.S. Troja

For the other ships their fate is somewhat different. Despite the fact that the allies had increased their naval presence in the area, the captains of the freighters *M.S. Heidelberg* and *S.S. Troja* decide to attempt an escape on the night of February 29, 1940. Both ships left Aruba's neutral waters under the cover of darkness and tried to avoid any contact with allied naval vessels. Given the fact that the allies were

previously deceived by the *Consul Horn*, they had no intention of making the same mistake. As a result, their escape does not go unnoticed.

The *Troja* was quickly detected by the British Danae class Light Cruiser *H.M.S. Despatch* under the command of Captain Allan Poland. It was only ten nautical miles west of Aruba when intercepted. As soon as the captain of the ship realized there was no escape, he ordered the crew to set fire to the ship to avoid capture of his ship and abandoned her. Lieutenant Governor Isaac Wagemaker reported seeing a boat on fire on the horizon at 10:30 at night. The glow of the burning could be seen even from Oranjestad. The ship sank at 01.45 hrs. on March 1, 1940. (Note: Shortly after the beginning of the war all German merchant captains received secret orders by the German authorities to prevent capture of the ships at all costs. The Captains did comply with these orders.) *Troja* is a lost wreck.

During that same night, a Lago lake tanker, the *S.S. Misoa*, captained by Ernest Armstrong, was returning to Aruba from Cartagena, Colombia. Suddenly, the crewmen sighted what appeared to be a fire at sea. When they approached, they noticed that it was the burning hull of a ship. Empty lifeboats were floating in the water, but no survivors or bodies could be found. It was rumored that this burning ship was the "*Troja*", which was intentionally burned by her crew, who were taken on board by the *H.M.S. Despatch* and transported to a prison camp in British Jamaica.

The *Heidelberg* manages to evade the allies one more day. However, on March 2, 1940, she was intercepted by another British D-class Light Cruiser *H.M.S. Dunedin (D 93)*, commanded by Captain Charles Edward Lambe sixty miles west, southwest of the Windward Passage, which is a strait located between Cuba and Hispaniola, northwest of Haiti. As ordered by Berlin the captain of the ship is forced to scuttle his ship to avoid capture. The *Heidelberg* disappears beneath the waves around 5:00pm, 25 crew members were

picked up by *H.M.S. Dunedin*. The crewmembers of the *Heidelberg* as well as the *Troja* were eventually detained in an internment camp in Jamaica. (Note: According to an eyewitness on *H.M.S. Dunedin* the *Heidelberg* was carrying the name *Heemskerk - Holland* which suggests that the *Heidelberg* also tried to escape using a false identity.) *Heidelberg* is a lost wreck.

Antilla's Attempt to Escape

Between September 1, 1939 and March 4, 1940, Captain Schmidt made no attempt to break the blockade of French and British warships arguing that because of engine problems which occurred during her maiden voyage, he could never outrun the fast British warships. (Note: The *Antilla* and her sister ships had a highly sophisticated and complex propulsion system, and both the *Antilla* and her sister ship *Arauca* experienced technical failures.)

According to a Dutch naval source the *Antilla* attempted to escape at the same time as *Heidelberg* and *Troja* (February 29, 1940). It is also said that Captain Schmidt and its crew must have seen the *Troja* in flame. He returned to the neutral waters at Malmok and threw its anchors for the last time. But according to a German source the *Antilla* made a solo attempt on March 4, 1940. Until now we have not found conclusive information on this.

According to Mr. James L. Lopez, an ex-Lago employee, in one of his books "*The Lago Colony Legend*", one ship came back to San Nicolas to discharge the sulphur cargo she carried (the *Antilla*). This same ship went to Oranjestad harbor and took on water and sailed back to Malmok Bay. Six days later the *S.S. Troja*, one of the four vessels also took water in the Oranjestad harbor. In January 1940, three of the ships left without notice. The *S.S. Antilla* stayed anchored in Malmok Bay.

Aruba is Drawn Into the War

In August 1939 Aruba's Lieutenant Governor Isaac Wagemaker and Governor Wouters from Curacao knew by then that the war was imminent and the time had come that Hitler would soon attack Holland. They knew that because suddenly there were 14 German ships in the Curacao harbor. In late August the authorities in Curacao had decided that they would no longer harbor German ships. All ships arriving after August 30, 1939, were ordered to Aruba. Aruba was in a high state of alert.

On May 10, 1940 German forces invaded The Netherlands. The *Antilla* was anchored in front of the Malmok beach in Aruba. Since April 12, 1940 her crew had been confined to the ship by order of the local authorities because of the ever increasing threat of war. Prior to that there were bonds that were forged between the crew of the *Antilla* and the Dutch militaries through their drinking at a common bar in Madiki/Oranjestad in Aruba. The name of the bar is unknown. As the German invasion was considered an act of war, the Dutch government then ordered all German merchant ships in the Dutch Antilles to be confiscated and the German crews to be arrested. In addition, the Dutch government's order included the confiscation of German businesses and interests and the detainment of German people and suspected German sympathizers.

The Attempt to Confiscate the *Antilla*

In a report of May 11, 1940 from Capt. G. H. v. d. Spek, Commanding Officer of the Militaries in Aruba to Commander John Louis Karel Hoeke, General Commander of the Militaries in Aruba and Curacao, states:

At 01:40 hrs. Van der Spek was informed about the start of the war. He left Savaneta Marine Corps base, along with one captain, two sergeants, two corporals, eighteen marines, and one driver, all members of the Royal Netherlands

Marines. They headed to the small quay at Oranjestad and were transported by sloop and a barge from the Harbor Service. Their military objective was to confiscate the *Antilla*.

According to the logs of the coastguard vessels *H.M.S. Aruba* and *H.M.S. Practico* they received news of the war at 03:00 hrs. At that time they were in the San Nicolas harbor.

At 03:10 hrs. Van der Spek and the marines arrived at the *Antilla*. According to Van der Spek:

"The extreme darkness that night made cover fire from a shore based machine gun and from their small caliber machine gun extremely difficult, if not impossible. We decided to wait until dawn in order to be able to support the assault efficiently with machine gun fire as we expected heavy resistance since the *Antilla* is known as an auxiliary ship and the shipmaster is a fiery Nazi man." (Note: After Captain Schmidt was apprehended, one of the items he left behind, as declared in his summary report, was a picture of Hitler in a silver picture frame. Which goes to say that he might have been a pro-Hitler)

By postponing the boarding operation the German crew had been given more than sufficient time to prepare the ship for scuttling. A decision Van Der Spek was heavily criticized for afterwards.

"After I had divided my division into patrols for the occupation of the bridge, the engine room, the deck and for taking the crew prisoners on the poop deck, we boarded at 05:00 hrs. The deck was covered with an oily substance which made walking very difficult. Until then nothing extraordinary was noticed about the ship. After the entire division had boarded I ordered the deputy commanders to carry out their assignments as soon as possible and I myself took the shipmaster and the first officer as prisoners in the saloon.

After approximately 10 minutes, a marine, Smeding, who was part of the Marine patrol, first class and assigned to occupy and control the engine room, informed me that the entrance door to the engine room was closed and that it was impossible to open it. One of the German crew members had locked himself in the engine room. He had opened the outside valves to flood the ship and afterwards escaped the engine room through the funnel according to one of my marines. Other crew members had started several fires on the ship. I ordered the shipmaster to have the door to the engine room opened immediately. He then gave the chief engineer, an old man, the order to open the engine room door. A few minutes later I heard a shot fired in the lower part of the ship. Smeding later told me he had fired a shot at the engine room door. At first, by threat, he had ordered the chief engineer to open the door, which appeared to be impossible since the door had been closed on the inside by an espagnolette and there was only one entrance door. The chief engineer had yelled to someone in the engine room to open the door. He heard, so he told me, the noise of the water rushing in.

At approximately 05:30 hrs. the crew was assembled on the poop deck and I ordered the shipmaster to lower the lifeboat and everybody to take a seat in it and to abandon the ship. I ordered the marines to embark on the sloop and the barge. The shipmaster stayed under my personal guard. He then informed me that his entire crew was present. By that time thick smoke was pouring out of the ship. Escorted by the marines, the crew was put ashore and handed over to the commanding officer of the Military Police."

Reaction by Commander J. L. K. Hoeke

The report from Mr. John Luis Karel Hoeke, General Commander of the Militaries in Aruba and Curacao, to Mr. G. H. v. d. Spek, Commanding Officer of the militaries in Aruba says as follows:

"With reference to your report concerning the capturing of the crew of the German freighter *Antilla* I would like to inform you of the following:

I cannot share your assessment that you and your division arrived at the *Antilla* at 03:10 hrs. and then waited until dawn before going on board. This delay gave the crew all the time to plan the sabotage, namely to set fire to the ship and to open the valves. You should have fired on the crew at the very first approach, rather than wait until dawn. It would have forced them to lower the rope ladder and then you could have continued with my instructions.

As a result of your waiting for dawn has cost us to lose a costly and brand new ship. The boarding of the division from the *Hr. Mr. Van Kinsbergen* in the Caracasbaai, Curacao, who worked without any help from the ship (at least the first half hour) has demonstrated that boarding and disembarking of the crew could have taken place under the same circumstances.

The above is reason for me to express my disappointment as far as your actions in this matter."

The Chronology of Events

Willem Donck, my colleague in Holland is doing extensive research on the *Antilla*. In one of his frequent visits to the National Archive in The Hague, he found a ship's journal of the coastguard vessel "*Hr. Ms. Aruba*". According to the journal the crew received a message at 03.00 hrs. on May 10, 1940 that Germany had invaded Holland. They immediately sounded "General Quarters".

At 03:50 hrs. *Hr. Ms. Aruba* and *Hr. Ms. Practico* left San Nicolas harbor and set course for Malmok bay.

At 06:00 hrs. that morning the *Hr. Ms. Aruba*, under the Commanding Officer LTZ Spaander and *Hr. Ms. Practico*,

under the Commanding Officer LTZ van Oss, arrived at Malmok. According to the ship's journal the officers of *Hr. Ms. Aruba* estimated that the *Antilla* had already been burning for at least an hour and was listing 15 degrees to port. The two officers climbed on board of the burning *Antilla* and established that the engine room and cargo holds 4 and 5 were on fire. The valves in the engine room could not be reached and therefore could not be closed. They could not find any German crew members. This makes sense because the crew and the marines left the *Antilla* at least a half hour before and were probably already ashore. After the crew members of the *Hr. Ms. Aruba* had abandoned the *Antilla* they fired two rounds with their 3.7cm deck gun at the *Antilla* to make sure no German crew members had stayed behind.

At 06:50 hrs. the *Antilla* was on fire from stern to bow and was listing 20 degrees to port.

At 11:30 hrs. *Hr. Ms. Aruba* left for San Nicolas. By then the *Antilla* was listing 30 degrees to port and was sinking. *Hr. Ms. Aruba* arrived in San Nicolas at 13:40 hrs.

In the official documents there is no mention at all of the crew heating up the boilers of the ship and letting cold water flow in thus causing a huge explosion. This is sometimes suggested as being the cause of the sinking. Also in several discussions on the internet there is a debate whether the *Antilla* was sunk by an explosion or not. According to the eyewitness report of the boarding party for the *Antilla* on May 10, 1940, the crew first set fire to the ship in holds four and five and the engine room, and then opened their valves to let the seawater in. Besides setting fire to the cargo holds, one crewmember locked himself in the engine room and opened the outside valves, causing flooding of the engine room. He is said to have escaped through the funnel.

Furthermore, between May and August 1940, U.S. divers inspected the hull to see if the ship was salvageable.

According to their report the superstructure of the ship was damaged by fire but the hull was undamaged and in one piece. The report concluded that the sinking was caused by the opening of the outside valves of the vessel. The big crack near the engine room was not caused by an explosion but as a result of heavy swells and was first noticed during an inspection by the Harbormaster of Aruba in 1953.

When the *Antilla* was set on fire by her crew, submarine O-15 arrived from Curacao, under the command of LTZ H. M. L. F. E. van Oostrom Soede to assist the boarding party but the fire was already out of control.

Primauguet was a French Duguay-Trouin-class light cruiser built by Arsenal de Brest (Brest, France) on August 16, 1923 operating in the Dutch West Indies waters during WWII, intercepting merchant ships. She was launched on May 21, 1924 and commissioned on April 1, 1927. On May 6, 1940, under the command of Captain Pierre Goybet relieved *H.M.S. Dundee* off Aruba.

On the evening of May 10, 1940 the *Primauguet* arrived with 180 French soldiers at the Eagle Pier to support the Dutch army. They boarded the vessel in Martinique on May 6, 1940 where they were at that time. At first instance, they were denied entrance because the Netherlands Antilles Governor, Gielliam Johannes Josephus Wouters and Aruba Lieutenant Governor, Isaac Wagemaker had no foreknowledge of their landing. Aside from that, a few days before the invasion of Holland, an American radio station announced that the invasion would take place at any moment. The local government feared that they might try to set the fuel depots on fire. A contact was made with London. However, after consultation with the government in Curacao, they were allowed to stay, and to arrange accommodations for them. The *Esterel*, an auxiliary French cruiser, captained by Seriot, carrying French marines on board, took care of all their requisites. Two days later, another French war ship, the *H.M.S. Barfleur*, brought 150 colonial troops over from

Senegal, French West Africa, to relieve the "old" group. It was the captain of the French armed cruiser *Esterel* who assured the Dutch that nothing was to fear from them, and the troops left Aruba quietly on July 6, 1940 on board of this vessel.

The Arrest of the Germans

From the beginning of the war, the governments of Aruba and Curacao had begun listing all foreign nationals of the Allies of Germany. They had been censoring the mail of these people and were forewarned of the impending invasion of Holland. They had names, addresses, car license numbers and formulated plans of action for when the invasion took place.

On the evening of May 10, 1940, all Germans and German sympathizers were rounded up. By 3:42am the last enemy alien was in the police station. At 3:57am Aruba reported the last enemy alien there had been arrested. According to ex-Lago employee and witness, Mr. John Opdyke, they were put up overnight at the Hotel Germania by the authorities. They were deported to the internment camp that had been previously prepared for them in Bonaire. On May 11, 1940, they boarded Lago's lake tanker, *S.S. Bachaquero*, at the Lago Lake Tanker Dock which took them to the Internment Camp in Bonaire. (Note: Mr. Opdyke worked in the Technical and Mechanical departments at Lago from 1937 - 1965.)

John was at the lake tanker docks in San Nicolas harbor, running survey lines when the internees were brought down to the lake tanker. As the Germans were coming to the pier, an old German who had been running a big camera shop in Aruba was smoking a cigar. At the time the lake tanker docks were extremely hazardous docks. John mentioned to the guard that no one should be smoking on the dock. The guard agreed and told the German to put out the cigar. His wife (or daughter) protested. The guard slammed his rifle butt to the pier deck, the German pitched the lighted cigar

into a nearby oil patch on the water. Luckily the water put out the cigar before the oil caught fire.

Throughout the Dutch Antilles a total of 220 German merchant sailors were arrested from 15 ships, (10 German and 5 Dutch), as well as the crew of the *Antilla*. Several days after their capture, the *Antilla's* crew were transported to the internment camp on the island of Bonaire. During the transportation the captain and his crew saw the remnants of their once proud ship sticking out of the ocean.

Along with these sailors, were 200 German and Austrian civilians including civilians that fled the threat of Nazi-Germany. Approximately 20 persons who were considered a threat to national security because of being alleged Nazi supporters were also detained in several school buildings. In July 1940 the internment camp was ready. Germans residing in Aruba and Dutch Nazis were kept separately. The women with children were given small individual wooden houses, while the married couples and families were permitted to visit them. The men, in greater number, were separated by barbed wire. Children received no education. Despite the criticism by many, their general condition of detainment was considered acceptable.

In the Bonaire camp they were not treated as prisoners of war. The circumstances in the camp were very difficult. Provision of food was not regulated and at first a priest had to deliver bread. They were allowed to play football, swim, and whenever possible, to follow their hobbies. In spite of all this, they complained constantly. Their attitude of bravado was proof enough that they had nothing to complain about.

On May 11, 1940 an agreement was reached between the Dutch authorities in Curacao and the British Consul that Great Britain would accept the 220 German merchant sailors and detain them in an internment camp in British Jamaica (presumably Up Park Camp). In the period between their

arrival in Bonaire and their shipment to Jamaica the sailors built the camp by early July 1940.

On July 5, 1940 the crew of the *Antilla* together with their 185 colleagues, including civilians, were escorted to the vessel *Jamaica Producer* and transported to the camp in British Jamaica where they spent the rest of the war. The internment camp in Bonaire was therefore not bought by Captain Schmidt of the *Antilla* as has been widely suggested, but by a local entrepreneur, Mr. Lodewijk Gerharts. On the spot where the camp was built, the Hotel Zeebad was built and later on the Divi Flamingo Beach Hotel, which is still there.

Additional information now reveals that on October 2, 1939, the Dutch Naval Artillery vessel *Hr. Ms. Van Kinsbergen*, under the command of John Louis Karel Hoeke, started a trip from The Netherlands to the West Indies accompanying two Dutch submarines O 15 and O 20. To avoid sea mines, they did not go through the Panama Canal but took the long route near the British Islands and arrived in Curacao on October 29, 1939. The O 15 stayed in Curacao while the O 20 continued further to the West Indies.

During the outbreak of the war in 1940 the *Van Kinsbergen* and the O 15 were in Curacao and also another Dutch submarine, the O 14 which was moored at Schottegat, alongside the Juliana Dock for overhaul. At that moment there were seven German merchant marine ships in Curacao seeking refuge, and they received an order to scuttle their ships or look for an escape. Should they not do this, they would be prosecuted according to the orders. The *Van Kinsbergen's* assignment was to detain the crew of the ships. Aside from the *Van Kinsbergen's* crew, Dutch militaries were also included in this action. The German freighters were scattered all around Curacao, the *Vancouver* and the *Este* were in Caracasbaai, the *Henry Horn*, *Karibia*, *Patricia*, *Frisia* and *Alemania* were in Fuikbaai. The ships which were in Caracasbaai were boarded first and confiscated with not

much difficulty. Of the five ships in Fuikbaai, the *Patricia*, *Frisia*, and *Alemania* were set on fire by their crew members. The fires were extinguished, and 25,700 tons of freight were confiscated by the Allied fleet.

Here follows a list of the ten German ships with the number of German merchant sailors detained on each ship:

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| 1. Alemania | 7 |
| 2. Antilla | 35 |
| 3. Este | 23 |
| 4. Frisia | 5 |
| 5. Henry Horn | 38 |
| 6. Karibia | 5 |
| 7. Patricia | 36 |
| 8. Seattle | 1 |
| 9. Vancouver | 64 |
| 10. Wesermuende | <u>1</u> |
| | 215 |

Besides the above, one German merchant sailor was turned over by each of the following five Dutch ships:

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| 11. Cottica | 1 |
| 12. El Libertador | 1 |
| 13. Ino | 1 |
| 14. Nero | 1 |
| 15. Pericles | <u>1</u> |
| | 5 |

Grand Total: 220

Crew List of the *Antilla*

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| 1. Achenbach, | Hans Paul |
| 2. Baresel, | Hans |
| 3. Bastian, | Walter |
| 4. Bürger, | Georg |
| 5. Carls, | Heinrich |

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 6. Ehlers, | Fritz |
| 7. Feuerstack, | Willy |
| 8. Finzel, | Horst |
| 9. Frerckse, | Julius |
| 10. Gantert, | Gerhard |
| 11. Gebke, | Wilhelm |
| 12. Griebenov, | Fritz |
| 13. Harbers, | Gerrit |
| 14. Jungnickel, | Kurt |
| 15. Kägeler, | Julius |
| 16. Kettner, | Karl |
| 17. Kirberich, | Hubert |
| 18. Lau, | Werner |
| 19. Lipke, | Werner |
| 20. Luddeke, | Adolf |
| 21. Niemeyer, | Heinz |
| 22. Ohrt, | Herbert |
| 23. Raup, | Bruno |
| 24. Reichenberg, | Kurt |
| 25. Reichmann, | Albrecht |
| 26. Rohwedder, | Rudolf |
| 27. Rupio, | Willy |
| 28. Schmidt, | Ferdinand (Captain) |
| 29. Schâgermann, | Siegfried |
| 30. Schwennosen, | Willy |
| 31. Slodowy, | Leon |
| 32. Staffel, | Werner |
| 33. Stüning, | Hermann |
| 34. Ullman, | Alexander |
| 35. Westphal, | Heinz |

Inspection of the *Antilla* Wreck

A letter of August 1940, informs the Dutch government of a report by Lloyds divers who inspected the wreck of the *Antilla* to determine if it could be salvaged. It states that the hull of the vessel was undamaged and only the superstructure had been damaged by the fire. Subsequently, there were many interested parties for the salvage of the

Antilla (Italian, American, & Dutch) but all negotiations ended quickly after they started. The first time any damage to the hull was observed was after the port authorities performed an inspection on the hull of the vessel in 1953. Subsequently, salvage was no longer an option anymore and plans were discussed to blow up the wreck for scrap. Fortunately the price of metal at that time was at such a low level, and because of the fact that her position didn't pose any danger for other ships, it was decided to leave the wreck where it was.

According to ex-Lago employee and author of three books, Mr. James L. Lopez, in one of his books, relates that four Lago employees, Bill Ewart, Alex Shaw, Jerry Krastel, and John McCord had an idea for raising the ship. However, the Dutch Government would not allow them to raise the ship until they had paid for it. Then Bill Ewart happened to be in New York a short time later and made some inquiries to see if there was a salvage company that would wait for their money until the ship was raised. However, he was told that there wasn't much point in doing so because the German Consul could claim the ship as German property once it was brought into a port. So Bill said his group lost interest in raising the ship.

***Antilla* Today – A Good Diving Spot**

Today the *Antilla* is one of the best ship wreck dives in the Caribbean. She lies on her port in 60 feet of water and according to divers, each passing day she is becoming more fragile. She lies abandoned all alone in silence for over 70 years and keeping her past to herself. Some parts of the superstructure used to breach the surface. At the present time the *Antilla* is not visible at the surface any longer and has disappeared forever and only a buoy can be seen floating on top of the water. Its location is approximately N12.60175,W070.5815 or 600 yards from shore. Being only 600 yards from shore makes it an easy dive. Many divers who dove on the *Antilla* say it is by far one of the best. It's

an easy dive for beginners, but also has many options for advanced divers too – the visibility is great and the depth allows for maximum bottom time. It is a fascinating shipwreck and the fact that it was scuttled during a time of war makes it all that more interesting.

The size of the *Antilla* is so big that it is virtually impossible to explore the wreck carefully on a single dive. It is better to schedule several trips and sample one section at a time. Diving can be done either as a shore dive or boat dive and the latter is recommended. The water temperature stays around 78+ degrees most of the year but visibility varies wildly.

Aruba, a dot on the world map, offers seven wreck sites for snorkeling, scuba, and free diving adventures: California; Antilla; Blue Reef and Debbie II; Pedernales; Harbor Reef/Pilot Boat; Sonesta Airplanes; and Jane Sea. Aruba is happy to be a top wreck diving destination. It was no surprise that Aruba was named the number two wreck diving spot in the Caribbean/Atlantic by the Scuba Diving magazine of March 2006. Aruba has consistently appeared in the top wreck diving category for the last 12 years, a feat the island takes a great deal of pride in.

Dive masters who've descended on the wreck hundreds of times say they still discover new sights with each visit. As word spreads, more divers are Aruba bound to explore the old ghost ship that sank when it was almost new and while two countries were clashing on the brink of a world at war.

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File on "Annual Report harbor & pilot service Aruba, 1938-1946".

File on "Annual Report on telegram & telephone service Aruba 1938-1950".

Annual Report Harbor and Pilot service 1939 of the German ships at Malmok, *Antilla*, *Heidelberg*, *Troja*, and *Consul Horn*.

File on "Aruba police report 1938-1950".2

File on sales of German merchandise which were confiscated by the government 1940-1953.

Journal of September 9, 1939: Meeting with Commander of *Hr. Ms. Johan Maurits* on the French marine tanker *Niger*. The Aruba Lieutenant Governor encountered some problems with this vessel. At the request of His Majesty Johan Maurits, the vessel had to leave the territorial waters. Meeting with coast guard in regards to the German ships, passengers and crew. Also a discussion to control the German members of the crew.

Journal of September 11, 1939: Meeting with official of the economic sector unwarranted diving costs. At the same time discussion with the coast guard commander on the German ships.

Journal of September 13, 1939: Meeting with military officials on present defense force and the use of them. The four German ships departed from of the San Nicolas bay and anchored at Malmok, (including *Antilla*).

Journal of September 16, 1939: Visit to Malmok to look at the locations of the four German ships, including *Antilla*.

Journal of September 19, 1939: Meeting with the director of Economical Affairs on the possibilities for the four German ships to get supplies.

Journal of September 29, 1939: The Aruba Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Isaac Wagemaker, called for a meeting in regards to possible food provision during the war.

Journal of October 12, 1939: Departure of the *Antilla* from Malmok to the San Nicolas bay to discharge the sulfur.

Journal of October 19, 1939: Meeting with the directors of Accounting and Economical Affairs with bakers to resolve increase in price of bread. *Antilla* departs from San Nicolas bay to Paardenbaai, Oranjestad to load drinking water.

Journal of October 20, 1939: Went to Santa Cruz and Noord to watch sowing of maize fields by school children. German ship anchored at Malmok departing to Paardenbaai to load drinking water.

Journal of November 12, 1939: Meeting with military officials on the removal of radio transmitters on board the German ships at Malmok.

Telegram of December 12, 1939 from the Financial Administrator to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor concerning the accountability of the costs of deliveries to the German ships. The receipt was sent per letter of January 11, 1940. No attachments.

Annual report: Ports authority 1939 whereby the Germans ships at Malmok are mentioned. Concerning: *Antilla*, *Heidelberg*, *Troja*, and *Consul Horn*.

Replenishment report of work performance of the station and radiotelegraph of 1939 where it is mentioned that the radio installations of the German ships *Troja*, *Heidelberg*, *Antilla* and *Consul Horn* were placed out of order.

File on "Deliveries by the government to the laid-up German ships, 1939-1940".

Copy of letter of January 12, 1940 from the Financial Administrator to the Aruban Lieutenant Governor in regards the delivery expenditures to German ships.

Journal of January 12, 1940: Had meeting with military officials to follow procedures on departure of the German ships at Malmok.

Journal of January 16, 1940: Deliberation with militaries and the police inspector on the precautionary measures in case Germany declares the war. In connection with the departure of military police commander and the departure of the S.S. *Consul Horn* ship.

Letter of January 18, 1940 from the Financial Administrator to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor regarding the costs of the delivery of water to the German ships, *Antilla*, *Troja*, *Heidelberg*, and *Consul Horn*. Reaction to letter of February 7, 1940.

Letter of March 1, 1940 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Financial Administrator with enclosure of authorized lists of the deliveries to German ships during the months of January and February 1940.

Letter of March 13, 1940 from British Naval Control Service Officer Aruba and the Aruba Lieutenant Governor where they inform that they no longer wish to salvage the *Antilla*.

Journal of April 4, 1940: Went to the Arend refinery for the demand of fuel to the German ship *Antilla*.

Letters of April 5, 1940/May 8, 1940 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Financial Administrator with enclosed expenditures of the German ships during the month of March 1940. No attachments.

Receipt April 15, 1940 from the Aruban Council to the Arend refinery for the amount due to oil delivery to the *Antilla*.

Telegram, date unknown, from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Netherlands Antilles Governor to inform that *Antilla* was set on fire by her crew and no longer to be extinguished and vessel is listing.

Letter of July 2, 1940 from the Harbor Master to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to inform the sale of the sailboat of the *Antilla*.

Letter of July 11, 1940 from the Aruba Ports Authority to the Curacao Harbor Master with questions in regards to a visit by Mr. Elias Mansur, a business man in Aruba, to buy the wreck of the *Antilla*. Mr. Mansur had already bought the lifeboat of the *Antilla*.

Letter of July 11, 1940 from the Aruba Harbor Master, Mr. M. Noot, to the Aruba Ports Authority to inform that the same buyer of the lifeboat, Mr. Mansur, would like to know if the *Antilla* wreck is for sale.

Letter of July 12, 1940 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Mr. Mansur with answer on his interest in the *Antilla* wreck and the amount he wishes to offer.

Letter of July 12, 1940 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Curacao Harbor Master with a list of radio transmitters confiscated from the German ships, *Antilla*, *Heidelberg*, *Consul Horn*, and *Troja*. (The local authorities after a short while returned one radio each to all four German freighters around Christmas for humanitarian reasons. The radios were stored at the Landsradio Dienst.)

Telegram of July 13, 1940 from the Curacao Government to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to request permission to permit Lloyd's surveyor to do investigation with a diver on the *Antilla* wreck.

Letter of July 23, 1940 from Mr. Mansur to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor offering Fls.6,000.00 for the *Antilla*

wreck under the condition that when he sells the wreck, he will donate 30% of the profit to S.A.N.O.A. His objective in buying it is to resell it for scrap iron, etc. [Note: S.A.N.O.A. (The Aruba Section of Society for Relief of Netherlands War), a committee which started on June 8, 1940, with a campaign to collect money to alleviate the suffering of war victims in the Netherlands and to fill their needs. On a simultaneous basis, they collected funds in Curacao and Aruba. The latter including the Lago Colony and Lago employees. In a short time they managed to collect a total of Fls.193,000.00. After the liberation of Holland, the money was handed to Prins Bernhard of the Netherlands while visiting Aruba. The money was used to fight tuberculosis among the youth.

Letter of August 28, 1940 from Mr. Mansur to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor informing him that since he did not receive a reply to his offer of July 23, 1940, he is sending a new offer of Fls.20,000.00 and 10% of the profit to S.A.N.O.A.

Letter of September 5, 1940 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Curacao Governor with a copy of the bid made by Mr. Mansur on the *Antilla*.

Letter of November 15, 1940 from the Netherlands Antilles Governor to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor relative to the request of Mr. Mansur to buy the *Antilla* wreck. The sale to Mr. Mansur is not possible. The English Admiralty will lift the ship. Request to facilitate.

Letter of November 21, 1940 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Mr. Mansur to inform him that the government cannot honor his bid to salvage the *Antilla wreck*.

File on "Sale of German merchandise confiscated by the government, 1940-1953" on the *Antilla* ship.

Annual report 1940 on the performance duties of May 10, 1940. Relative to the German ship *Antilla* and the internment of the crew.

Journal of January 22, 1941: Visit by Mr. Robert W. F. Newton, Director of the Arend Petroleum Maatschappij, to inform of the possibility to salvage the sunken German ship *Antilla*. In the book *Our Story Lago Colony*, by James L. Lopez also mentions the raising of the *Antilla*. (Note: Mr. Newton was an Engineer who built the Taratata Pier for Shell at the Arend refinery.)

Letters of January 25, 1941 from Robert Newton to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor with request to salvage the *Antilla*. He wants to do this to help with the struggle against the enemy. (Handwritten letter.)

Letter of January 25, 1941 from Robert Newton with reference to his previous letter to salvage the wreck on a straight contract for Fls.55,000,00 and the wreck would be ready to tow to sea.

Letter of February 4, 1941 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Netherlands Antilles Governor in regards to the bid of Mr. Newton to salvage the *Antilla*. Mr. Newton is seen to be a knowledgeable person as he was the Director of the Arend Petroleum Maatschappij from 1929 to 1930. He is also responsible for the construction of the largest pier for the above mentioned refinery. He inspected the wreck and calculated that the cost for salvaging it would be Fls.21,250.00 and this amount he wishes to receive not until all the work has been completed.

Telegram of March 17, 1941 from Curacao Harbor Master to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to approve salvaging of the *Antilla* with the help of Newton from London. Arriving on Thursday morning per KLM for meeting. Make reservations and pick up at airport.

Telegrams of March 10, 1941/March 17, 1941/March 27, 1941 in regards to the salvaging of the *Antilla* by Mr. Newton. With attachment on expenses and authorization to Mr. Newton.

Telegram of March 18, 1941 from Curacao Harbor Master to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to arrange meeting with Newton for Thursday. Must be in Curacao again on Thursday afternoon.

Journal of March 20, 1941: Meeting with the Curacao Harbor Master and Mr. Newton who wants to salvage the vessel. The latter signed an agreement along with the Aruba Lieutenant Governor and the Curacao Price Commissioner, Mr. W. Gauw.

Agreement letter of March 20, 1941 signed by the Aruba Lieutenant Governor and the Curacao Price Commissioner to have Mr. Newton salvage the *Antilla* at an approximate cost of Fls.20,000.00. All possible assistance by the coast guard vessel on duty and the pilot services of Oranjestad to be given to him free of cost.

Telegram of March 22, 1941 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Curacao Harbor Master on approval of expenditures for salvaging the ship.

Telegram of March 22, 1941 from the Harbor Master to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor informing that Fls.20,000.00 was deposited in the Emansbank.

Journal of April 5, 1941: Went to the Malmok with the Technical Official to watch progress in the illumination of the *Antilla*, there was no progress.

Letter of May 5, 1941 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor declaring that Mercedes Alfonso, Arend Petroleum Maatschappij employee, is working as diver with the

salvaging of the *Antilla*, under the responsibility of the government.

Journal of May 17, 1941: To Lago for meeting to borrow a diver to work on the *Antilla*.

Statement of June 4, 1941. Bank statement of account from Harbor Master, Mr. M. Noot, with a list of checks for Fls.20,000.00 for the salvaging of the *Antilla*, payable to Mr. Newton. For the period of March 24 to December 15, 1941. Five pages.

Journal of August 20, 1941: The Curacao Harbor Master and the Oranjestad ports authority went to check the work progress on the *Antilla*.

Letter of September 3, 1941 from Mr. Newton to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to inform of difficulties encountered to salvage the *Antilla*. He could not find divers who would be willing to do the job.

Letter of September 10, 1941 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Mr. Newton asking him to come to his office for an interview.

Letter of September 10, 1941 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Curacao Harbor Master in regards to a letter from Mr. Newton explaining the detected problems of the salvaging of *Antilla*.

Letters of September 16, 1941 from Mr. Newton to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor with the agreement to meet with the delegation in regards to the salvaging of the *Antilla*.

Letter of September 26, 1941 from Mr. Newton to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor explaining why he could not meet with the deputy in regards to the salvaging of the *Antilla*.

Letter of September 29, 1941 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Mr. Newton to inform him that the meeting is set for 4:00pm on Wednesday, October 1, 1941.

Journal of October 1, 1941 with information on the difficulties that Mr. Newton found on the salvaging of the *Antilla*. Unsatisfactory resources.

Annual report: Ports authority 1941 whereby it is mentioned on the usage of a flatboat for the salvaging of the *Antilla*. At the same time usage of the ground floor of the lighthouse at Seroe Colorado by the coast guard.

Account and responsibility of period July to December 1941 regarding the costs in the efforts to salvage the *Antilla*.

Letter of March 13, 1942 from the British Naval Control Service Commander, Mr. S. Butler to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor that no further action in regards to the salvage of the *Antilla* is contemplated.

Letter of June 24, 1942 from the Police Inspector to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor that an American living in the Lago Colony, Mr. Donald Blair, recently sent a ship's bell to the U.S.A. After some investigation it was found that the bell had the inscription "*Antilla 1938*". Mr. Blair said that he had received this bell as a gift from Mr. Robert Little, when he left for the U.S.A. Mr. Stonehouse, who succeeded Mr. Little, said that Little told him that the bell was removed from the vessel when work was performed by the divers. Mr. Little was for some time a representative of the Lloyd Registry. Early in 1942 he left the island. During his stay in Aruba, there were investigations done to salvage the vessel.

Letters of June 24, 1942/July 6, 1942/August 12, 1942/August 15, 1942/August 19, 1942 in regards to the uncertainty of the ship's bell from the *Antilla*. The ship's bell was ultimately sent to Curacao on August 19, 1942. The bell

has an inscription "*Antilla 1938*" on it. Hopefully the bell can still be found in Curacao.

Letter of June 30, 1942 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Mr. W. Gauw, Price Commissioner in Curacao to inform him of the bell.

Letter of July 6, 1942 from the Price Commissioner to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to inform him that the bell went unlawfully in the possession of Mr. Little. Contrary to Curacao many people have handed over salvaged artifacts. I hereby urge you to have him return the bell and send it to me.

Letter of August 12, 1942 from the Aruba Police Inspector to the Curacao Price Commissioner informing him that he had received a letter from the office of the Aruba Lieutenant Governor on July 8, 1942 saying that the bell had already been confiscated from Mr. Blair by the Airport Customs and a penalty was given to him

Letter of August 15, 1942 from the Curacao Price Commissioner to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to request him to send the bell which was confiscated from Mr. Blair will be sent to him on the Coast Guard vessel.

Letter of August 19, 1942 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Curacao Price Commissioner assuring him that the bell would be sent to him with the Coast Guard vessel.

Letter of March 13, 1943 from British Naval Control Service Officer Aruba to the *Aruba Lieutenant Governor* where they inform that they no longer wish to salvage the *Antilla*.

Letter of March 17, 1943 from the Netherlands Antilles Governor to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor concerning the salvaging of the *Antilla*, where the condition of the wreck will be informed. In the letters of March 18, 1953 and April 14,

1953 is the condition of the *Antilla* given. The *Antilla* is no longer salvageable because it is broken into two pieces. To permit blasting the wreck and to sell the iron does not seem possible.

Letter of July 5, 1943 from the Aruba Harbor Master to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor on the request of Mr. Henry Devolder to salvage accessories from the *Antilla* also the propellers, anchor, chains and machines. Expresses his disappointment that efforts were never done to salvage these valuable accessories. (Note: Mr. Devolder, a Belgium experienced diver, who has spent most of his life with water over his head in all parts of the world. At age 12 he left Belgium on a training ship and several others. In 1927 he came to work on the construction of the Eagle Pier. In 1935 he joined Lago's force and was a member of the Dry-dock staff.)

Letter of July 10, 1943 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Netherlands Antilles Governor in regards to the visit of Henry Devolder to salvage material and parts from the *Antilla*. Request to send information to the Curacao Harbor Master. Mr. Devolder is the best diver in Aruba.

Letter of July 28, 1943 from the Netherlands Antilles Governor to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor with advice on the request from Mr. Devolder on the salvaging of the accessories from the *Antilla*.

Letter of August 11, 1943 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Mr. Devolder informing him that the salvaging has been cancelled because the materials have been underwater for too long and the only use would be for scrap and if sold, would eventually be insufficient to cover the expenses.

Letter of October 10, 1952 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Commission of the Netherlands Antilles to

permit Mr. Rederij Esser (Amsterdam) to salvage the *Antilla* wreck for Fls.10,000.00.

Letter of October 27, 1952 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Ruling Council of Netherlands Antilles to inform them of the request of October 14, 1952 from Mr. Roderij Esser, Amsterdam, Holland on the salvaging of the wreck of the *Antilla* at Malmok, Aruba, for the sum of Fls.10,000.00. Although the amount is justifiable, but since the wreck belongs to the Dutch Kingdom, I advise you to take the matter to the Dutch Government.

Letter of October 27, 1952 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to Rederij Esser in regards to his letter of October 14, 1952 to inform him that since the wreck is the State property I sent it to the Ruling Council in Curacao, to propose taking the matter to the Netherlands Government. You are also kindly asked to send your request to the Netherlands Council.

Letter of March 10, 1953 from the Dutch Minister, Mr. J. M. Kiveren to the Netherlands Antilles Governor to inform that they are not enthusiastic to permit Mr. Esser to salvage the wreck.

Letter of March 17, 1953 from the Netherlands Antilles governor to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor in regards to Rederij Esser to salvage the *Antilla*. To inform the situation of the wreck. In the letters of March 18, 1953 and April 14, 1953 the situation is again informed. In particular: *Antilla* is no longer salvageable because it is broken into two pieces. To permit blowing up of the wreck and sell the scrap metal also seemed not satisfactory.

Letter of March 28, 1953 from the Head of the Public Works, Engineer A. van den Berg and Harbor Master to the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to inform that the salvaging of the wreck is not possible as it is broken into two pieces.

Letter of April 14, 1953 from the Aruba Lieutenant Governor to the Netherlands Antilles Governor to inform that the Harbor Master and the Head of the Public Works inspected the situation of the *Antilla* wreck. Due to the two halves of the wreck being separated, salvage is no longer possible.

From the Author

The ship's Bell

A ship's bell is one of the most important things on a vessel. The *Antilla's* bell which was unlawfully removed from the vessel is a valuable and historical piece of artifact in any museum.

The reason Mr. W. Gauw, the Curacao Price Commissioner wanted the bell to be sent to Curacao, simply had to do with the fact that the ship was confiscated by the Dutch government and the Dutch government was officially the owner of the ship and therefore also the ship's bell. I presume that after the bell was taken from the sunken ship, it would remain somewhere in an official location in one of the museums in Curacao. The bell had an inscription "Antilla 1938" on it.

Ammunition On Board of the *Antilla*?

In all documents seen from the navy and local authorities there is no evidence found to support the supply ship theory. The ship was regularly checked by authorities for the presence of weapons. In the frequent contacts between the local government and the allies (British, French, and American) there's no mention by the allies that the *Antilla* was a U-boat supply ship. It was a regular freighter. If the government knew it was a supply ship they would have definitely ordered the ship to leave the neutral waters in order to maintain their neutrality. Captain van der Spek's statement that the *Antilla* was an auxiliary ship was just a

rumor on the island and he used this for his advantage to justify his actions during the failed boarding attempt.

According to Wilem Donck's investigation in The Hague, the "supply ship rumor" might have found its origin in a visit to Aruba by a German tanker in January 1939 that took in fuel and, according to an intelligence report, was suspected of carrying U-boat fuel. According to the intelligence report the tanker afterwards replenished a German cruiser at sea.

THE END

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Stan Norcom
The Lago Colony Legend
Tom Dwyer
Willem Donck



German ships in the Curacao harbor
(Barconan Aleman den e haf di Corsou)



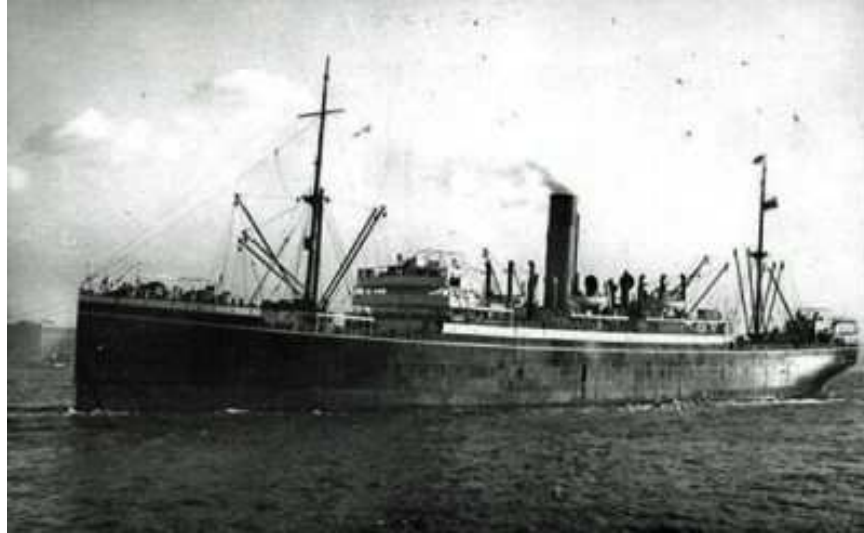
German ships anchored in neutral waters of Aruba
(Barconan Aleman hancra den awanan neutral di Aruba)



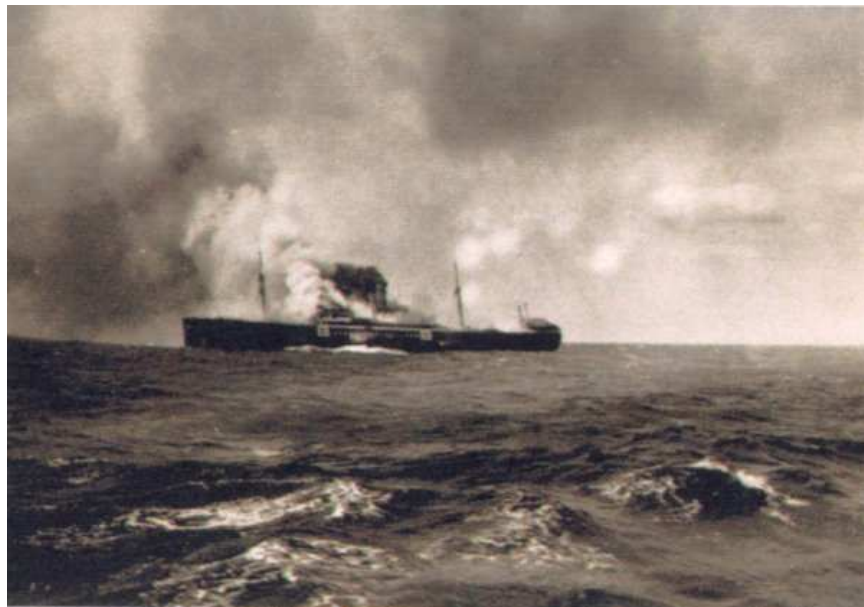
E. S. Antilla



S. S. Troja



M. S. Consul Horn



M. S. Heidelberg



*HMS Dunedin which intercepted MS Heidelberg
(HMS Dunedin cu a intercepta MS Heidelberg)*



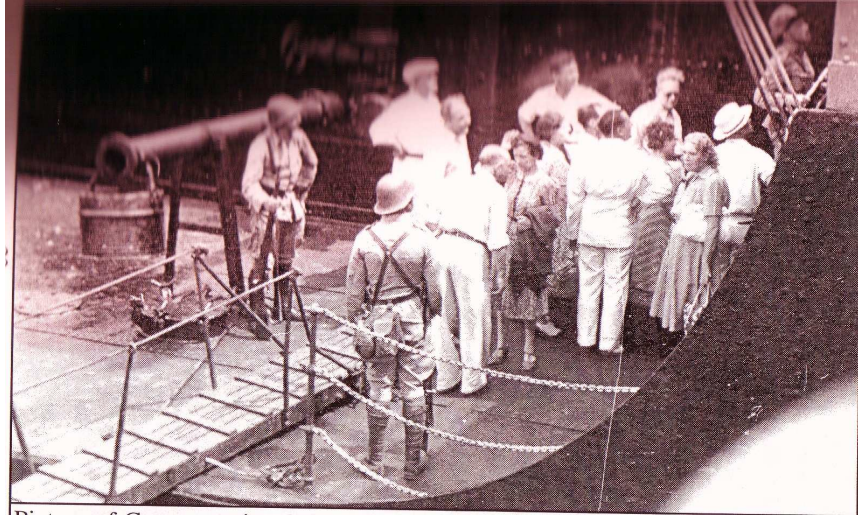
*Heidelberg crew members picked up by HMS Dunedin
(Tripulantenan di Heidelberg recoge pa HMS Dunedin)*



German paratroopers landing in Holland
(Trupanan Aleman bahando riba Hulanda)



Lieutenant Governor Isaac Wagemaker of Aruba
(Gezaghebber Isaac Wagemaker di Aruba)



German captives boarding the *SS Bachaquero*
(Alemannan captura subiendo *SS Bachaquero*)



SS Bachaquero which took German captives to Bonaire
(*SS Bachaquero* cu a hiba Alemannan captura pa Boneiro)



*HMS Enterprise which intercepted MS Consul Horn
(HMS Enterprise cu a intercepta MS Consul Horn)*



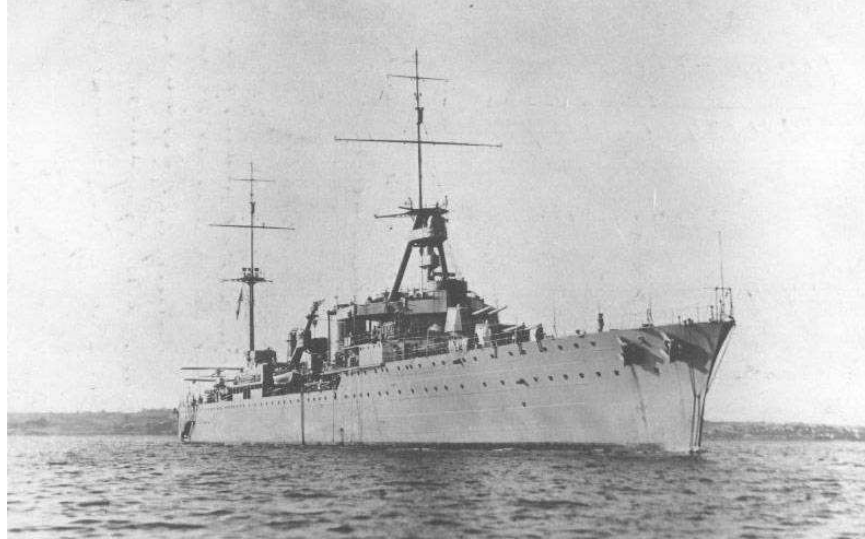
*HMS Despatch which intercepted SS Troja
(HMS Despatch cu a intercepta SS Troja)*



Lake tanker *SS Misoa* which saw *Troja* in flame
(Lake tanker *SS Misoa* cu a mira *Troja* na candela)



Capt. G.H. van der Spek



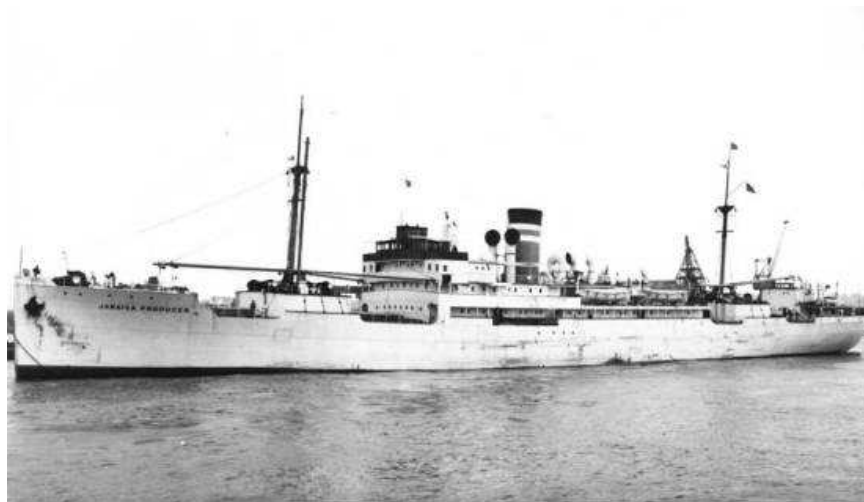
French Cruiser *Primauguet* which brought 180 soldiers
(Crucero Frances *Primauguet* cu a trece 180 solda)



HMS Barfleur which brought 150 Colonial troops
(*HMS Barfleur* cu a trece 150 trupa Colonial)



Internment Camp in Bonaire for detained Germans
(Campamento na Boneiro pa e Alemannan deteni)



Jamaica Producer which took detained Germans to Jamaica
(*Jamaica Producer* cu a hiba e Alemannan deteni pa Jamaica)



The wreck of *E.S. Antilla*
(E ruina di *E.S. Antilla*)



E.S. Antilla – A good diving spot
(*E.S. Antilla* – Un bon luga pa sambuya)

Historical Edition

The naval war in and around the Caribbean is one of the few aspects of the Second World War that has yet to receive serious study. Yet it represents a dramatic and event filled chapter in the history of warfare. One of the most intriguing elements of this story is the tale of the German freighter, the *Antilla*. Scuttled after a failed boarding attempt by Dutch marines, the *Antilla* is the target wreck in the Caribbean and the source of endless myth and speculation. Why did the Dutch boarding party delay its mission, giving the captain the opportunity to sink his ship? Was it a "grey ghost" involved in a clandestine operation and jettisoned from the vessel prior to its sinking? Did information supplied by the *Antilla* about the operation of the vitally strategic Aruban oil refinery play a role in later U-boat attacks on the island?

Dufi Kock, Aruba's pre-eminent historian, provides a fascinating look at the opening months of the Caribbean war and the *Antilla's* role in the conflict. For any student of The Second World War or visitor intrigued by the history of the island paradise of Aruba, ***The Story of the German Freighter E.S. Antilla*** book is a must read.

xxxXXxxx

Adolf (Dufi) Kock, after having worked 35 years for the Lago refinery and also at several hotels, decided to dedicate his time to community work and also to investigate the history of Aruba as well as The Second World War. He has four books published:

No. 1 – Guia Con Pa Solicita Pa un Trabou

No. 2 – Fecha y Datonan Historico di Aruba

No. 3 – Historia di Un Auto Clasico

No. 4 – Historia di Savaneta